IN THE SUGAR CAMP.

BY JULIA A. SABINE.

From the Portland Transcript.

"Goin' to make sugar this year, neighbor Dunlap?"

The speaker was a young man of perhaps twenty-two or three. He stood carelessly upon his empty sled, directing his oxen by word, or now and then the merest touch of the whip, while he turned partly around to address the man whose sled followed close behind. He was a handsome young fellow and even the voluminous, and somewhat ill-fitting wraps with which he was encumbered, could not conceal the easy grace of his well developed figure.

It was bitterly cold. The sled-runners creaked upon the snow, icicles hung from the patient oxen's nostrils, and the two men, returning from the village whither they had gone with sleds heavily loaded with wood a few hours before, stamped their feet and slapped their benumbed hands, to keep the circulation up.

"Wall, I dunno, Norman," replied the elder man. "Why?"

"I thought if you wasn't goin' to use your place this spring, mebbe we might fix up a trade, so's that I could work it along with mine."

"Wall, p'r'aps we can; stop and have a bite of supper as you go along and we'll talk it over."

"Not tonight," returned the younger man. "I'm obliged to you, but my supper will be waitin' for me. I'll come over by an' by, if you're goin' to be at home."

"Not much danger of my goin' out agin this cold night," returned Mr. Dunlap. "Come over, come over and bring your sister along. We'll all be glad to see you." And then he turned in at the gate of his own farmyard, and Norman Chellis, who lived half a mile farther on, urged his oxen to a quicker pace.

Farmer Dunlap chuckled to himself as he unyoked his oxen and gave them a plentiful supper. He thought he could see how things were going. He did not for an instant suppose that Norman Chellis would have any desire to take his sugar place, if it were not for the opportunity such an arrangement would give him for making love to Hetty Dunlap, the farmer's one child, and he was well pleased to let such love making go on. For Norman Chellis was a fine young fellow, sensible, kind hearted, a good farmer, and well to do. He owned a well stocked farm, free from incumbrance, and it was no secret that his sister who kept house for him, was to be married in the fall.

The two farms adjoined, and Farmer Dunlap often thought that if they could be combined by the marriage of Hetty and Norman, it would be a "very handsome property."

As he pushed back his plate, after eating a hearty supper of roast pork and apple sauce, finishing with a huge piece of mince pie, the farmer said, carelessly to his wife:

"I guess Norman'll be over after a spell. He kinder wants to work our sugar place this year, along with his'n; and he said he'd come and talk it over bime by, so I told him to fetch Abbie along."

"What does he want of our sugar place, I'd like to know?" said Miss Hetty, with a toss of her pretty head, while the color deepened on her cheek.

She understood very well why he wanted the sugar place and, sly puss that she was, felt a little thrill of triumph, as she admitted the reason to her own heart.

"That's his business, not mine," said her father deliberately. "You must ask him, if you want to know."

And Hetty tossed her head again and made a great noise clearing away the supper dishes, as she declared "It was nothing to her."

The family had seated themselves in the sitting-room, the "work" being "all done up" before the expected guests had arrived. Hetty had brought from the cellar a heaping dish of Baldwins, and polished them till their rich red cheeks shone. In the cool pantry a huge picher of cider was waiting, and a corn popper and some ears of pop-corn lay upon the kitchen table.

Mrs. Dunlap settled herself in her favorite seat before the fire with her knitting work, while Hetty opened her piano and played some of her father's favorite airs. For Farmer Dunlap could refuse this one ewe lamb nothing, and when she set her heart upon a piano, the piano was bought, although he sold one of his finest Morgan horses to raise the money.

While Hetty was playing there came a knock at the door, and the farmer, nothing doubting that his expected guests were waiting, hastened to light a candle and let them in. He found, however, that the singing master from the village had walked out to make a friendly call. Now when a young man walks two miles, with the mercury below zero, to call upon a pretty girl, it argues that he is pretty far gone, and farmer Dunlap ushered this unexpected visitor in, with a sense of grim amusement as he thought of his coming discomfiture.

Hetty received the new comer with great cordiality, and the two were chatting very merrily when Norman and Abbie Chellis came in, a little later. Norman frowned, as he saw the singing teacher so comfortably established by Hetty's side, and for a few moments a little stiffness settled over the group. There was no good feeling between the two young men. Hetty had gone to the singing school all winter in company with Norman and Abbie Chellis, but Norman had felt obliged to admit that Hetty seemed to care much more for Mr. Thornell's society than she did for his, during the intermission and the brief time for chatting before the opening of the school. Then, too, Mr. Thornell led the choir, so Hetty, who was at the head of the trebles, stood next to him on Sundays, often looking over the same book, while poor Norman, who was a bass singer, was forced to take a back seat, litterally as well as figuratively.

It had seemed to him lately that he could never get a chance to see Hetty by herself, and when this evening, on which he had counted so much, he found his rival already in possession of the field, he felt that it was very hard.

Farmer Dunlap took possession of him at once to talk business and settle about the sugar place, a very easy matter, when each man was so desirous of the same result. In fact, the difficulty seemed to be that it was too easy, until Mrs. Dunlap, hearing her husband say:

"Just let us have what we need for our own use, and I shall be satisfied," to which young Chellis replied:

"No, no. I just want enough to make up what I have promised to deliver in Boston, and you can have the rest," thought it was time to interfere.

"Now, father," she said, "that aint no kind of a way to do business. If Norman wants the sugar place, let him take it on the same terms anybody else would—half an' half. You to furnish buckets and spouts, and so on, and he to furnish labor."

So Mrs. Dunlap having cut the Gordian knot, the matter was speedily settled, and Norman was free to join the group of young people by the piano.

For a time they sang glees and quartettes, their voices harmonizing sweetly. Then they adjourned to the kitchen, where they popped corn and frolicked until they were tired, and were glad to come back to the sitting room and sit down quietly to eat their apples.

"Name my apples," said Hetty, suddenly, to Abbie Chellis, who responded promptly:

"Very well, I'll name it Mr. Thornell."

Hetty bent gravely over her plate to count the seeds, and the singing-master drew near to help her. Norman was sure that he slyly abstracted one or two; but Hetty was unconscious of it, if it were so, for a real blush depened the color on her cheek, as Thornell said triumphantly:

"Eight, they both love."

"I'm going to take another," said Hetty, pettishly; "name this one, Abbie."

"Norman," returned Abbie.

And again Hetty counted the seeds, as if it were a matter of life and death. Norman bent forward to make sure there was no cheating this time. He knew it was nonsense, mere child's play, and yet he felt strangely anxious for the result. His heart beat furiously, his breath came quickly, and when Hetty announced with a nervous laugh:

"Five, I cast away," he felt unaccountably depressed.

It was soon nine o'clock. Abbie put on her shawl and nubia, while Norman went out to get his horse. Farmer Dunlap urged Thornell to "spend the night." "It's a long cold walk to the village, he said, "and we've got plenty of beds."

Norman Chellis, coming in to say the horse was ready, did not half like the idea of his rival's sleeping at the Dunlap farm, and he volunteered, cordially enough, to drive him to the village.

"Abbie can wait here," he said, and Abbie assured him of her entire willingness to do so.

But the singing teacher declined both offers and as the merry jingle of Norman Chellis's sleigh bells died in the distance, he set out on his long, cold walk in the opposite direction.

He thought over the events of the evening as he strode rapidly over the crisp snow path. If Norman felt depressed, he was far from being elated. Hetty, it was true, had shown him marked favor, but he was by no means sure of her preference. And it was of vital importance to him that he should win her. Difficulties were closing around him on every side. If he could only stave them off until Hetty was his wife, he knew that farmer Dunlap would help him for his daughter's sake, and once free from his entanglements he would lead a new life. He had lived fast, had done many things which he ought not to have done, but he was not entirely bad, and although in his mannish selfishness he was willing to appropriate Hetty and her patrimony to himself, he said aloud, as he walked on in the bright starlight:

"I do love her, and please God if I win her, I will make a good husband."

"What possessed you to ask the singing master to stay tonight?" said Mrs. Dunlap, when she had her husband to herself. "Can't you see that he's dangling after Hetty? I for one don't want to give him no chances to cut out Norman. I don't half like him, with his white hands and black beard and soft ways."

"Well, well, mother," said the farmer, "there aint no harm done, since he didn't stay, and I don't believe Hetty is such a fool as to like a finified fellow like him, with his airs and graces, better than she does Norman Chellis, that she's known all her life."

"That's just the trouble," said Mrs. Dunlap. "Girls don't know their own minds, and they're always taken with something new."

But Hetty lay, far into the small hours, asking her own heart which of the two wooers she loved, and her heart was non-committal, and would not answer.

[CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.]

Osculation.

All the Year Round.

The "British Apollo," when asked why kissing was so popular, what its benefit, and who its inventor, replied: "Ah, madame, had you a lover you would not come to Appollo for a solution; since there is no dispute but the kisses of mutual lovers give infinite satisfaction. As to its invention it is certain that nature was its author, and it began with the first courtship." It seems difficult to conceive of a time when kissing was unknown in this island, and yet a Scandinavian tradition states that kissing was first introduced into England by Rowena, the beautiful daughter of Hengist. In Edward the IV's reign it was usual for a guest, both on his arrival and his departure, to kiss his hostess and all the ladies of her family. Again, in Henry's time, when Cavendish visited a French nobleman at his own chateau, the mistress of the house at the head of her maidens thus greeted him: "For as much as ye be an Englishman, whose custom it is in your country to kiss all ladies and gentlewomen without offense, and although it be not so here in this realm, yet I will be so bold as to kiss you, and so shall all my maidens." Erasmus, grave and staid scholar as he was, writes enthusiastically of the practice: "If you go to any place you are received with a kiss by all; if you depart on a journey you are dismissed with a kiss; you return—kisses are exchanged; they come to visit you—a kiss the first thing; they leave you—you kiss them all round. Do they meet you anywhere—kisses in abundance. Lastly, wherever you move, there is nothing but kisses—and if you had but once tasted them! how soft they are! how fragrant! on my honor you would not wish to reside here for ten years only, but for life."

Free Passes.

Western Plowman.

There is one feature about the Inter State Commerce bill that looks just a little ludicrous. It prohibits railroads from issuing free passes except to their own employes. Now we are as much opposed to deadheadism as any one. What transportation we get we pay for, and would not, if we could, get it in any other way; but to prohibit by law a man or corporation from giving away what is his own, looks like prohibition gone to seed. Why not extend the principle still further and prohibit the grocer from bribing his patrons by giving candy to their children? Why not prohibit the lawyer from giving free advice? Or why not—and this strikes us nearer home—prohibit editors from giving free notices? But no one need worry about this particular feature of the Inter State Commerce law. If the railroads find it to their advantage to carry a man for nothing they will find a way to do it. It may give them a good excuse for refusing favors to the chronic dead beats, and it will be useful that far, but that it will reach the evils it is intended to prevent is all bosh. And it is just as well that it is so, for the principle that a man shall not be allowed to control his own property is a dangerous one to instil into our laws. To say that every service rendered should be paid for is a very nice theory, but no laws nor power on earth can put it into practical effect.

She Knew a Magnet.

American Magazine.

Some years ago a Miss H—— was teaching school in Dixon, Ill. One day in the reading class they came across the word "magnet." The teacher asked how many in the class knew what a magnet was, and requested those who knew to hold up their right hands.

All the class was motionless for a moment, and then one little girl rose and put up her hand. "Well, my dear," said the teacher, "what is a magnet?" "I don't know," said the little girl, "as I know what it is, but I have seen 'em at home in mother's cheese."

After having your hands in soapy water, wet them in vinegar and spirits of camphor, it kills the alkali and keeps your hands soft.